

James S. Heffner  
President, WCSU Student Government Association

Good evening Co-Chairs Harp and Walker, and members of the Appropriations Committee. My name is James Heffner, currently a junior and dual English and Political Science major and Conflict Resolution minor. I am also the President of the WCSU Student Government Association. I reside in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> districts of Bethel. I thank you for allowing me a few moments to speak to you today about the portion of the Governor's budget that affects Western Connecticut State and the whole Connecticut State University System.

First, I would like to say that my experiences at Western have transformed me into the man that I am today. When I entered Western as a freshman in fall 2008, I was very introverted and found it difficult to speak in front of a large crowd. Never would I have thought that I would become the student's voice at Western and see myself before a board of legislatures in the coming years. Through my experience at Western, I have come to appreciate the value of public service. I joined the Student Government Association in March 2009 after observing several troubling characteristics of the university.

I saw classrooms that were too large. I saw many adjunct professors who couldn't foster long term relationships with their students. I saw fewer classes made available as we continually faced hiring freezes. Now, as these same problems endure our struggling economy, our students will face these problems at an even greater magnitude and depth if action is not taken appropriately.

This past semester, a four percent increase in Western's enrollment meant my Western Literature course swelled to over 40 students. Meanwhile, the Litchfield Residence Hall saw triple housing assignments in rooms meant for only two students. It's clear that more and more students are choosing Western Connecticut State University year after year due to its affordability during our economic recovery. However, it has also become clear that we currently lack the facilities to provide an acceptable class size and living situation to our students.

Western was asked to do more with less, our university saw a five and six percent increase in tuition for residential and commuter students respectively. Any cuts that we receive will have to be made up by tuition rises that many of our students who work while studying simply cannot afford. Many non-traditional students attend Western and have families and career responsibilities that affect their education.

Western and the whole of the Connecticut State University System come from far and wide in the State of Connecticut to learn alongside their peers in an education system that provides more than just an education to students. Upon graduation, ninety percent of students stay in our great state to pursue career opportunities. Our four campuses in Danbury, Willimantic, New Haven, and New Britain give the state \$8.75 back in economic development for every tax dollar that goes into our universities.

I am well aware that sacrifice must not only be shared by each state agency and program, but by each and every resident of Connecticut. However, the proposed cuts and consolidations to our most affordable universities will only seek to slow Connecticut's economic recovery.

